

Message Text

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43

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2449

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: CALL ON KING OF LAOS

1. SUMMARY. I PAID MY FAREWELL CALL ON THE KING OF LAOS
IN LUANG PRABANG
TODAY. IN THE COURSE OF THE CALL AND
LUNCH, HE MADE CLEAR THAT HE DOES NOT BLAME THE U.S. FOR
THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM,
HE SPOKE PUNGENTLY ABOUT THE MENDACITY OF THE NORTH
VIETNAMESE AND HE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED HIS HIGH REGARD
FOR THE U.S. AND HIS EXPECTATION OF CONTINUING CLOSE
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND LAO . END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE COURSE OF A THREE HOUR LUNCH AND CALL ON THE
KING TODAY, A GOOD DEAL OF GROUND WAS COVERED. THE
FOLLOWING ARE THE HIGH POINTS COVERED.

3. INDO-CHINA WAR. THERE IS MUCH CRITICISM ON THE
I.S. TODAY, BUT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PRESENT
SITUATION LIES WITH THE LEADERS OF BOTH SIDES IN
VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. IT IS SHALLOW AND FALSE TO
BLAME THE U.S. FOR DIFFICULTIES WHICH THE LEADERS
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HAVE BROUGHT ON THEMSELVES. IN THE WEST PEOPLE

BELIEVE THAT THESE ARE FRATRICIDAL WARS BUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TONKIN, ANNAM AND COCHIN CHINA ARE VERY REAL AND THE VIETNAM WAR IS BETWEEN PEOPLE WHO ARE FUNDAMENTALLY VERY DIFFERENT. THE PARIS AGREEMENT WAS PEVRFECTLY REASONABLE PROVIDED ONE ASSUMED THAT THE PARTIES WOULD COMPLY WITH IT.

4. CAMBODIA. THE WAR IN CAMBODIA IS A STRUGGLE FOR LEADERSHIP. THE KING SAID HE REMEMBERED LON NOL FROM A VISIT TO PHNOM PENH IN THE EARLY FORTIES. HE HAD THEN BEEN ONE OF THE BRIGHT YOUNG OFFICERS WHO USED TO RIDE SIHANOUK'S JUMPERS. IF ONE UNDERSTOOD SIHANOUK'S CHARACTER, IT WAS EASY TO SEE WHY HE PERSONALIZED HIS HOSTILITY. HE HAD EITHER SCORN FOR OR PERSONAL SCORES TO SETTLE WITH HIS OPPONENT.

5. NORTH VIETNAM. TO UNDERSTAND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ONE HAD TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY WERE CONGENITAL LIARS. THEY HAD SURVIVED SIX CENTURIES OF CHINESE DOMINATION BY BRINGING LYING TO A FINE ART. THE TRUTH AS IT IS UNDERSTOOD ELSEWHERE IS TOTALLY UNFAMILIAR TO THEM.

6. AMERICA. THE U.S. WAS A MARVELOUS COUNTRY. HE HAD BEEN FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER BY GREYHOUND AND FELT HE UNDERSTOOD THE NATIONAL CHARACTER. THE KING REMINISCED AT LENGTH ABOUT NEW ORLEANS, WILLIAMS-BURG, FISHING IN THE POTOMAC, OLD GRANDAD, THE PLAZA HOTEL, ETC. ETC.

7. U.S. PRESIDENTS. THE KING SAID HE HAD HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF KNOWING PRESIDENTS TRUMAN, EISENHOWER, KENNEDY AND JOHNSON. EACH HAD DONE HIS UTMOST FOR HIS COUNTRY AND FOR WORLD PEACE. THE DECISIONS EACH HAD MADE WITH REGARD TO THIS PART OF THE WORLD HAD BEEN CORRECT AND WISE GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PREVAILED AT THE TIME.

8. US/LAO RELATIONS. "WE" WOULD ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL
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FOR THE ASSISTANCE GIVEN BY THE U.S. OVER THE YEARS, BUT LAOS MUST LEARN TO STAND ON ITS OWN FEET. UNFORTUNATELY, THE GOVERNMENT'S UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMIC AND FISCAL MATTERS WAS INFANTILE. IT WOULD TAKE TIME TO REACH MATURITY ON COMPLEX MATTERS OF THIS KIND. THE COUNTRY WAS POOR AND MUST LIVE FRUGALLY. THE GOOD WILL AND FRIENDSHIP OF THE U.S. WAS OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE.

9. VISIT TO SAM NEUA. THE KING SAID HE WOULD GO TO SAM NEUA SOON. HE REMINISCED AT LENGTH ABOUT THAT REGION OF LAOS AND TOLD OF COUNTLESS JOURNEYS ON FOOT, ELEPHANT AND PONY FROM LUANG PRABANG TO HANOI WHEN HE WAS A SCHOOLBOY. IN THOSE DAYS THE TRIP TOOK A MONTH.

10. LAO POLITICS. POLITICAL DIFFERENCES IN LAOS ARE NOT DOCTRINAL OR PHILOSOPHICAL. ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITY REVOLVES AROUND INDIVIDUALS WHO SEEK POWER AND THEIR SUPPORTERS ARE MOTIVATED BY LOYALTY TO A PERSON RATHER THAN TO ANY BROADER CONSIDERATION.

11. THAILAND. THE KING EXPRESSED THE HIGHEST REGARD FOR THE ROYAL FAMILY AND KING OF THAILAND WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS "STRAIGHT", A QUALITY WHICH HE FOUND LACKING IN OTHER THAIS.
WHITEHOUSE

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